

**Coronavirus (COVID-19) Updated Employer Technical Resources**

As the United States continues to address the COVID-19 Pandemic, we have moved to a “new normal” of temporary office and facility closings. Many employees are working virtually from their homes. These changes have created new and different areas of focus to properly and effectively manage the effects of COVID-19, as compared to even one month ago. Examples of new focus areas include the following, many of which are addressed in this bulletin:

* Security and protection of temporarily closed facilities and properties.
* Protecting your home and your family – disinfecting and cleaning.
* Home safety – electrical and fire prevention.
* Home office ergonomics and practical workstation considerations.
* EEOC – Workplace Protections and Reasonable Accommodations.
* Department of Labor – FMLA and Fair Labor Standards Act

We are providing this memo to our valued policyholders to raise your awareness to several valuable resources concerning COVID-19. We strongly encourage employers to regularly monitor and review the following website links, resources, and information outlined in this memo. Employers are also encouraged to monitor local and state Health Department websites for information specific to your particular location.

***NOTE – If website links to not properly launch directly from this document, simply copy and paste the link directly into your web browser. Google Chrome is recommended for most sites.***

**Temporary Building and Facility Closures:**

Although not an all-inclusive list, below are some practical considerations to proactively manage risk during temporary facility closures:

* Ensure all windows, doors, garages and other entry points are locked and secured.
* Remove or properly store items of high value inside interior rooms or closets and out of view from the public thru exterior windows, glass-paned doors, etc.
* Inform neighboring businesses and local authorities of the facility closure. This increases their ability to provide assistance in observing and noting any suspicious activity such as vandalism, theft, etc. Local authorities can include drive-bys and door checks while in the area.
* Try to keep the property in “Operational or Open” mode and ensure lawns and landscaped areas are maintained. Consider having mail delivered to an alternate address and cancel or place a hold on newspaper delivery. Ensure exterior and interior lights are working to aid in deterring vandals. Consider putting interior and exterior lights on timers.
* Limit Premises Liability. While your property may not be open for business, trespassers and pedestrians in the area still remain a concern. Local police, fire fighters, and maintenance workers may also access the premises. It is critical to maintain housekeeping of public access areas and walkways, properly secure benches/seating and handrails, and remove any tripping hazards.
* Avoid Damage. Continue with your scheduled maintenance of the property. If the length of closure is extended, periodically inspect the roof, insulation, attic, basement, gutters and other areas of the property. Check for any necessary repairs, leaks, mold, and blocked drains and drip lines. It is also important to maintain the interior air quality of your building at a reasonable temperature and humidity level. As we move into the summer months, excess humidity resulting from air conditioning systems being shut down can create damage. Make sure to have someone regularly check the building’s thermostat to ensure the appropriate temperature and humidity ranges are being maintained.
* Fire Prevention. Remove excess flammable and combustible materials from the building and premises. This includes properly maintaining weed and foliage growth around the facility. Ensure that all fire protection systems remain in proper working order and are tested and maintained as if the facility was open.
* Security. Consider additional use of web cameras and other types of surveillance systems that can be monitored remotely. All security and related systems should be regularly inspected and tested to ensure they remain in good working order.

**Closed Facility Access:**

Consider the development of specific protocols if an employee has to enter a closed facility for any reason. The following is an example, for illustration purposes only, of a protocol to help limit the potential spread of COVID-19:

1. The employee should call or email your designated Facilities Office Manager to inform them about the reason to access the facility; the date and time they plan to access the facility; and the duration the employee will be on the premises.
2. The Facilities Office Manager will provide a list of instructions all employees must follow when accessing the facility, considering items such as:
	1. Avoid using public transportation to get to the office. Confirm if the company will reimburse employees who drive to the office or use a car service.
	2. Use hand sanitizer before you enter the building and when you exit. Attempt to always open doors with a paper towel or other disposable barrier.
	3. Limit interaction with anyone else that is in the office. Maintain 6 feet of separation if possible.
	4. The employee should complete their task in a timely manner and exit the office as soon as possible.
	5. Ensure all doors are properly closed and locked.
3. The employee should call or email the Facilities Office Manager to report completion of the visit.

**CDC Guidance – Protecting Your Home:**

With thousands of employees and family members now working and attending school virtually from their homes, a shift in focus to prevent further spread of the virus into and out of the residence is paramount. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has established a dedicated COVID-19 website that contains a wealth of information to protect yourself and what to do if you think you are sick. Specific CDC website links focused on these issues include:

* CDC Main COVID-19 web page - [CDC-COVID-19](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html)
* Protecting Your Home - [CDC - Prepare and Protect Your Home](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prepare/protect-home.html)
* Clean and Disinfect Your Home - [CDC - Clean and Disinfect](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prepare/cleaning-disinfection.html)
* Disinfecting Your Home if Someone is Sick - [CDC - Disinfect if Someone is Sick](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prepare/disinfecting-your-home.html)

**Home Safety – Electrical and Fire:**

As more employees work from home and the number of resident occupants increase due to school and University closings, awareness to common hazards in the home is critical. Electrical and fire safety precautions are of utmost concern. For example, as student and employee workstations are set up in multiple areas of the home there tends to be an increase in the use of extension cords, the use of multiple outlet plug-ins, and therefore, potential overloaded circuits. There may also be an increase in the amount of cooking, the use of portable heaters, smoking, and the use of candles. The following websites provide guidance on these types of hazards and the necessary controls:

* The Electrical Safety Foundation International – Home Safety - [ESFI - Home Safety](https://www.esfi.org/home-safety)
* National Fire Protection Association – Top Fire Causes - [NFPA - Top Fire Causes](https://www.nfpa.org/Public-Education/Fire-causes-and-risks/Top-fire-causes)

**Temporary Home Office Workstations:**

Working from home on a temporary basis typically involves the setup of a computer workstation in an area that is not commonly used or designed for this purpose. In these unprecedented times it is most likely not feasible to set up each home office workstation as ideally as one could in an office setting. There are practical guidelines that have been developed by OSHA to assist employees in making their workstation as ergonomically correct as possible. The website link below takes you to one of the more practical considerations, Good Working Position (i.e., body posture) is important for ergonomic workstations. Employees who can set up their home office work areas keeping these guidelines in mind may experience more comfort in the temporary work environment.

* [OSHA - Computer Workstations - Body Position](https://www.osha.gov/SLTC/etools/computerworkstations/positions.html)

**Department of Labor and EEOC Information:**

Many employers may have questions concerning the impact of COVID-19 on various employer and employee issues: The Family Medical Leave Act (FMLA); Reasonable Accommodations; Fair Labor Standards Act (FSLA); and other similar aspects of the employment relationship. The following websites provide valuable information and resources on these topics:

* Department of Labor FMLA Q&A - [DOL - FMLA Q&A - Pandemic](https://www.dol.gov/agencies/whd/fmla/pandemic)
* Department of Labor Fair Labor Standards - [DOL - Fair Labor Standards](https://www.dol.gov/agencies/whd/flsa/pandemic)
* EEOC - [EEOC - COVID-19 - Rehabilitation Act and ADA](https://www.eeoc.gov/eeoc/newsroom/wysk/wysk_ada_rehabilitaion_act_coronavirus.cfm)

**We hope that this information is valuable. Please contact your designated Arch Risk Control representative if further assistance is required. You can also reach our message center below and we will contact you as soon as possible:**

**1-888-411-2832 or** **losscontrolservicescenter@archinsurance.com**

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